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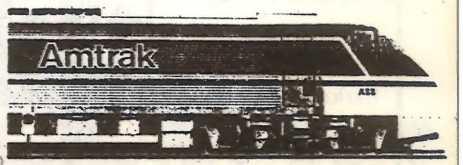

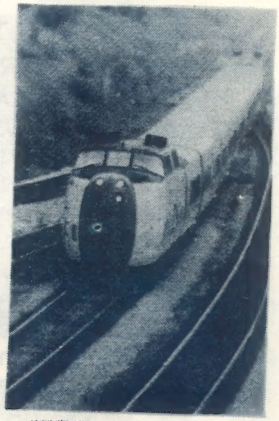

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MARCH 15, 1997

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

ON THE COVER

The Alaska Railroad announced in a Feb 13 release that it will add a scenic rail link to the wildlife- and glacier-cruise businesses that operate out of the Prince William Sound port of Whittier, about 60 miles south of Anchorage. A daily passenger train will leave Anchorage daily at 9am, returning from Whittier at 8:15pm. The train will stop at Girdwood on each trip, adding a link to that small mountain community, hiking trails in the Chugach Mountains, and the Alyeska Prince Hotel. Morning arrival in Whittier is 11:30am, and the return at 5:45pm. The schedule dovetails with the half-day tours of the northwestern fjords of Prince William Sound offered by several tour operators. Deborah Hansen, Director of Passenger Services said "This is a direct result of customer and business demand. Agents wanted it. The day cruise operators wanted it. This is a logical expansion move for the railroad." The new train, the ARR said, will have large windows, spacious seating, handicapped access, snack service and tour guides. The ARR said it is tentatively planning to add full-service dining in 1998. The rail trip also eliminated a 50-mile drive back to Anchorage from Portage after a day out on the water. The fare for the new Anchorage-Whittier service is $49 round trip. The railroad did not indicate the starting date for the new service, nor give the location of the photo on the cover.

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EAST COAST REPORT

Amtrak's **Auto Train** has now been assigned new GE P42 diesels for its 861-mile run between Lorton VA and Sanford FL. The high-tech, 4250hp engines provide more than ample power for the 40+ car consist of the **Auto Train**, which generally consists of about 15 Superliner II passenger cars and 25 auto carriers. This photo was taken of the **Auto Train** at the Lorton VA terminal on Feb 12, 1997 with new P42s nos. 32 and 26 just before its departure for Sanford. Photographer Alex Mayes posed his wife and long-time RTN subscriber Teresa Renner in front of P42 no. 32, just before boarding the train to head south.

On Feb 25 I learned via my scanner that train 56, the **Vermonter**, had arrived late at New Haven, and that the train was delayed further when the cab car on the head of the train had to be removed and an F40 engine added on the head end. I later learned that the train had hit a shopping cart somewhere on the NE Corridor. The train left 45mins late.

I watched **Vermonter** train 55 arrive at New Haven 3mins early on Feb 26. It had F40 274, coaches 44641*, 44665*, 44231, dinette 48158, baggage 1800 and F40 259 (asterisks mean cars in full NEDirect livery). The train was blue-flagged, and the rear F40 was uncoupled and backed away a few feet. Then the lead F40 was removed and AEM7 no. 973 with cab car 9640 backed on and coupled up. The train left 3mins late. The AEM7 and cab car came out of motor storage late, after the train's arrival.

Folks who use the bus to and from Union Station in New Haven have new expanded service effective Mar 3. Mon-Fri new service to the station leaves downtown at 10:06 and 10:50pm. From the station to downtown, new trips leave at 10:35 & 11pm, and 12:09am.

On Saturdays, CT Transit has added new late service on the B West Haven line which diverts from the normal B line to serve the station. New trips downtown to the station leave at 6:35, 7:00, 7:35, 8:10, 9:10 and 10:10pm. New service from the station to downtown lvs at 6:43, pre-existing trip at 7:00, then 7:40, 8:02, 9:02, 10:02 and 11:02pm. Note that these all are timed to connect with Metro-North arrivals.—Bob Underwood.

●●●

The weekend of Feb 22-23 saw the physical work start on Metro-North's $4 million reconstruction of the North Avenue Bridge, situated just east of the New Rochelle station on the New Haven Line. Contractors used a 650-ton crane with a 200-foot boom to lift the 25 steel I-beams that will support the structure over the catenary wires and local transmission lines that span the four tracks. The project should be completed by Aug 1997. The cost is shared by Amtrak, Westchester County and Metro-North.

Year-to-date Metro-North on-time performance was the same as of the reporting dates of Feb 16 and Feb 23: 97.7% systemwide. M-N's goal for 1997 is 96.5%, and it seems odd for the railroad to be reminding its employees of a goal that's actually lower than the current level!

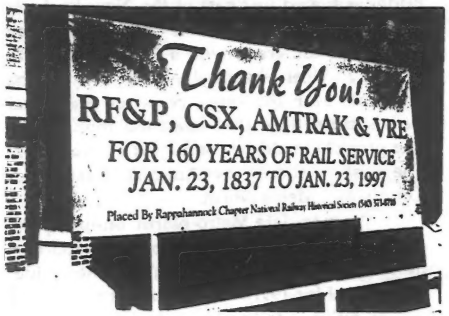
Virginia Railway Express was to purchase in early March a new headquarters in Alexandria VA, and to move into it in October. While the new building, now a condominium, is bigger than needed, VRE will rent out about 37% of the space. Also, VRE is about to order

13 new bilevel cars. Ridership began increasing in Jan after a period of decline set off by an expansion of carpool lanes on I-95. Projected increases make the new cars necessary, and VRE expects savings from fewer crewmen needed to be hired for the higher-capacity cars, which will replace some single-levels. The new car order will run about $23 million.

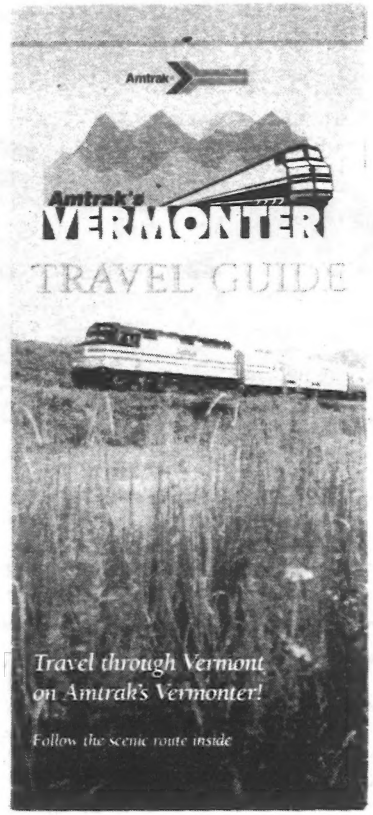
●●●

Amtrak has published a very fine "travel guide" for the Vermonter, illustrated here. The heavy, glossy-paper, full-color guide opens to 12 pages of regular timetable size. Each inside page covers one stop on the route between Brattleboro and St. Albans, providing for each one or two color photos of the area, with a description of local attractions, information numbers and list of station amenities. There is also an introductory note ("Here at Amtrak we're very proud of the Vermonter") and the information that a bike map for any destination station can be requested (from whom?). The booklet lists Amtrak's Web page address and that of Vermont travel (http://www.travel-vermont.com).

The mayor of Richmond VA on Feb 26 asked the House Appropriations subcommittee on transportation for a third installment, $10 million, for renovation of the city's Main St Station. The feds have granted over $17 million so far toward the $34.5 million project. Its first phase will begin in Dec—building of a 500-foot platform and renovating the station building. Then highway access will be improved, and finally an intercity bus terminal will be added.



Commemorating 160 years of rail service at Fredericksburg VA, the Rappahannock Chapter of NRHS prepared this banner thanking RF&P, CSX, Amtrak and VRE for their service. John Stith photographed it in February.



Amtrak workers knew about problems with the Hackensack River Bridge in NJ as long as a year ago, the Newark Star Ledger reported in early Feb. The workers did nothing to correct the problems, the paper said, and now they face disciplinary action or dismissal by Amtrak. The bridge figures in the derailment of the **Fast Mail** on Nov 23, 1996, in which 36 people were injured.

NY subway ridership has "risen to levels not seen in more than a generation", the NY Times reported Feb 16. The paper said the increased patronage is mainly from immigrants, who depend on the trains to reach work or school. Reported the Times: "Annual ridership on the subways began declining in 1970, as many middle-class and working-class New Yorkers fled to the suburbs. The number of passengers fell to 995 million in 1991 but started climbing back in 1992, the Transit Authority said. Last year, despite a 25-cent fare hike, 1.1 billion people—the largest number since 1972—rode the subways, and the Transit Authority collected $24 million in unexpected revenues." The No. 7 line is particularly affected, and its Main St station in Flushing is now undergoing renovation (one of the TA's few capital projects, the Times noted). Express service will be extended in late March on the No. 7 from Woodside station to Queens Plaza.

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NJ Transit approved a capital budget Feb 25, which includes funding for the Camden-Trenton rail project in South Jersey, and a variety of ongoing and planned rail projects in North Jersey.

NJT is budgeting $26 million for design and other preliminary work for the Southern New Jersey Light Rail Transit System, from Camden to Trenton. At an "open house" meeting held by NJT and its contracting firm for the rail project, NJT rep Phyllis Elston said the 33-mile line would be equipped with 24 diesel-powered LRVs, either the Siemens RegioSprinter or a similar design. A one-way trip would take about an hour, with headways of 15mins throughout the day, but 30min headways late at night and on weekends.

The line would use street-running in downtown Camden. Several buildings in the line's path would have to be demolished. Other property to be acquired by NJT in the city includes parking and vacant lots. A vacant patch of land next to the now-closed west entrance of the Camden Transportation Center would be used for a station there.

Several towns along the Delaware riverfront in Burlington County have become battle grounds between pro- and anti-rail forces. Rail supporters believe the Camden-Trenton line would enhance employment, business and recreational travel opportunities in the region. Anti-rail persons, mainly homeowners within a few blocks of the line, contend that rail transit would divide and disrupt their neighborhoods and endanger children and other people (who, they have never said, don't belong on active railroad tracks anyway).

The anti-rail sentiment is probably meanest in Pennsauken, a township lying between the city of Camden and the Burlington County line. Very few residents and no politicians there have expressed support for light rail. At a NJT-organized meeting in Pennsauken, intended to allow one-on-one discussion between residents and transit planners, some 70 residents arrived at once at the start of the meeting and demanded to be addressed as a group.

"Normally, these meetings are walk-ins," said Pennsauken Mayor Steven Petrillo. "Thank you for coming here tonight in a show of unity." After several attempts to break the group into smaller groups, NJT reps "accommodated" the township's request, but later said the change in format did not allow people opportunities to voice specific concerns.

Interestingly, NJT originally planned a station for Pennsauken's Delair neighborhood. Latest plans have that station moved to 36th St between River Road and Westfield Avenue in Camden, literally at the city limits with Pennsauken. A shop facility for rail equipment adjacent to 36th St is also planned.

●●●

Ridership jest keeps growing on the Atlantic City rail line. Nearly one million passengers rode in 1996. The exact figure is 967,297 one-way trips, up from 1995's 865,213 and over 400,000 more than 1992's 562,901.

In 1993 the Atlantic City line's first major expansion was its extension from Lindenwold to Philadelphia. The next year, a station in Cherry Hill opened. Other than these expansions, the line's customers and supporters contend that NJT has done very little to market or promote the line, and a number of NJT officials from board members to frontline managers are, by work or action, neglecting or harming the line's productivity and potential.

Equipment has been sent from the Atlantic City line for maintenance at the Meadows Maintenance Complex in Kearny, only to be returned with the same defect or damage unrepaired. At times, such non-repairs forced the equipment to be taken out of service and sent north again. Cleaners and maintainers at Atlantic City have been cut from six to two workers per shift. A track supervisor exercised his seniority and vacated his Atlantic City positions, saying he had seen lack of track maintenance and didn't want to be around or to be blamed for any major derailment. And a master mechanic at Atlantic City, informed of the malfunction of an equipment set's one lavatory, awaited the equipment's arrival from Philadelphia at 2am, whereupon he had some sharp words with the engineer who turned in the defect.

NJT has reprieved the line's operation until Mar 1998. Despite growing ridership, the line is NJT's poorest economic performer, partly due to fares being far lower than those for comparable journeys in North Jersey and labor rules that pay crew members an additional amount for traveling to an Atlantic City signup. (Crew members who are regularly assigned to Atlantic City do not get this travel pay.) The line is isolated from the rest of the NJT network. The Camden-Trenton light rail line would be a natural feeder for Atlantic City

but NJT is not considering any connectivity between the two.

Ridership may increase in May with the opening of the Atlantic City Convention Center, adjacent to the rail terminal. Other new convention and visitors' facilities in Atlantic City are also being built. These, and improved promotion and a more sensible fare structure, may take South Jersey's only rail commuter line off the perennial hit list drawn up by NJT's bean counters. —James Thornton.

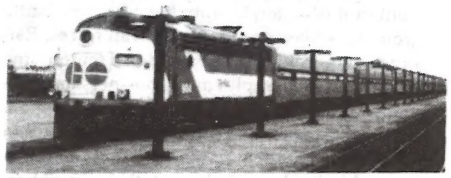
Despite the increase in subway riders in NYC recently, bus ridership in the city has declined, falling nearly 6% in 1996. The decline was from 459.6 million in 1995 to 435.8 million in 1996, the NY Times reported. An MTA official told the paper that reasons for the decline include "the fare increase in late 1995, maintenance problems, a severe winter in 1996, and more people shifting to the subway or smaller, faster van services." Another reason is the presence of discourteous drivers, and to alleviate this problem the MTA is sending its 8900 drivers to a school to learn courtesy.

Every so often a NE newspaper writes up Amtrak's **Merchants Limited** train (and it *is* named that, now that Amtrak has restored train names in the Corridor). The Baltimore Sun did that a short time ago, pointing out again how its loyal commuters spend their time, leaving very early in the morning to reach work in Manhattan and elsewhere, forming a sort of commuters' club. The paper quotes commuter Will Calves, who testifies "You can read, drink and, God forbid, even work and be productive. My wife drives 35 miles to work and it takes her as long as it does me—and I go 120 miles on the train".

The Washington Metro is thinking about ways to lower its electricity bill, which runs about $40 million per year. It buys its power from Pepco in DC and Maryland and is committed to 10 years more on its contract, reported the Washington Post (Feb 25). In Virginia it uses Virginia Power. But the agency notes that BART got its bill lowered from $21 million to $9 million last year when the state legislature allowed it to switch to the Bonneville Power Administration from the local Pacific Gas & Electric. And the MBTA in Boston negotiated a lower rate with Boston Edison, after the state permitted it to search for cheaper power suppliers.

Not all Virginia Railway Express directors agree that declining ridership last year was caused by introduction of carpool lanes on I-95 (see also p. 4). Two board members expressed belief that lack of innovation in VRE and fares that are too high are to blame. They said that VRE is taking steps to improve service by adding a second platform at Manassas and more parking at Quantico.

RAIL CANADA



Right: A former GO Transit locomotive, leased by Miami's TriRail, along with several Amtrak Heritage cars, awaits disposition at Amtrak's Miami station. Photo by Jack Turner.

The trend toward abandoning lines with critical segments of passenger service is accelerating, thanks to the Canadian Transportation Act. The CN line through Lévis, Quebec, was slated for abandonment on Feb 18, depriving passengers of direct ferry service from the **Ocean** and the **Chaleur** to Québec City. A coalition of rail advocates held a press conference Feb 10 at the Lévis station to press federal and Québec authorities to act.

While the feds have shown willingness to fund the purchase of the Chandler-Gaspé line, they have stayed out of the Lévis case, and let CN abandon the Montmagny subdivision, from Feb 22. VIA was moving trains to Ste-Foy on Feb 19. The province *could have* imposed a railway-only zoning on the line; that kept the Lachute sub of CP Rail intact. Transport 2000 and a Québec lawyer, Yvan Roy, who accuses the former National Transportation Agency head and VIA's Le François of at least the appearance of conflict of interest. --Transport 2000.

The last VIA Rail **Canadian** left Orillia ON on Sep 21, 1996, "west"-bound the day before CN abandoned 28 miles of the Newmarket sub, between Barrie and Roma. Barrie and Newmarket also lost the **Canadian**, but Newmarket still has GO Transit trains. The **Canadian** now takes the Bala sub on the east side of Lake Simcoe and makes no stops between Barrie and Washago. This "improvement" is thanks to the new Canadian Transportation Act. —Transport 2000.

Less than a year after their withdrawal, seven of VIA's remaining FP9 locomotives are being retrofitted with HEP generators for service on remote Manitoba and Québec lines, replacing F40s. The STCUM has sidelined three of seven ex-CP FP7s on Lakeshore commuter runs. —T2000.

A North Sydney, NS resident, Dave King, is circulating a petition to return rail passenger service to Cape Breton.

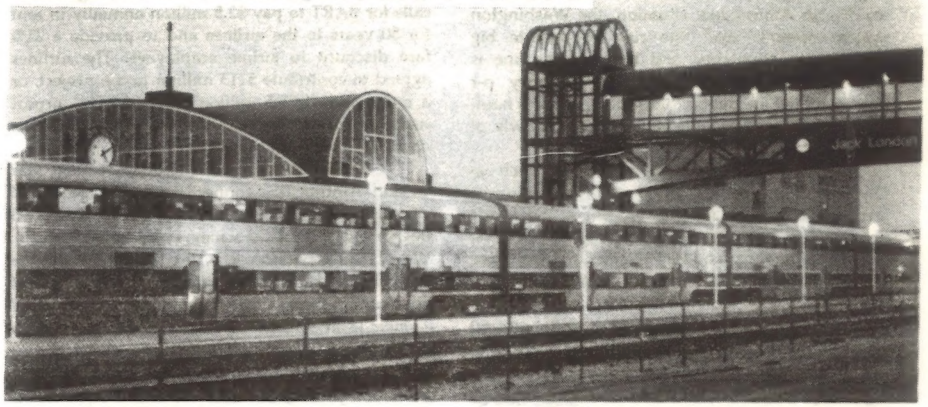
QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"There was a time when people spent days just getting to the next town. Driving changed all that."

—From current radio commercial for General Motors cars.

(Begging your pardon, but wasn't it the railroad that changed all that?)

WEST COAST REPORT



CHRISTMAS TRAIN: **San Joaquin** train 718 pulls into Oakland's Jack London Square station at 5:10 pm in the dusk of Christmas night, Dec 25, 1996, to load passengers for the start of its run to Bakersfield CA. The train consists of new California cars. Photo by RTN.

Amtrak West plans to buy 30 new locomotives to re-equip West Coast short-distance trains: 21 F59 locomotives from EMD and nine P42s from General Electric, the latter being an option under an earlier contract. The F59s (Calif. car locos) will have some improvements—stronger fuel tanks, automatic train-stop equipment and more comfortable engineer seats. Amtrak also wants an option to buy 20 more later. Delivery could begin next year—the order depends on EMD financing.

Amtrak West also recently sent a letter of interest to car manufacturer asking for feedback on the design of new cars to replace its aging Amfleet and Horizon equipment. Amtrak would want 7-9 new trainsets including coaches, first-class coaches and café cars.

Metrolink will run its annual **Orange Blossom Specials** Apr 19—three round trips Orange County to Riverside and one round trip Burbank-Glendale-L.A. to Riverside via the UP route. And on Jun 21-22 the California Speedway trains will run from Oxnard, Lancaster, L.A. and Oceanside direct to the new California Speedway at Fontana. Most Saturdays in June through Sep will see San Clemente Beach trains running from San Bernardino, Riverside, La Sierra, West Corona and Orange. (Orange is a new stop this year.) They won't run from Rialto this year. Specials also run on these Sundays: Jul 20, Aug 10 & 31, and Oct 19.

San Diegan Express and the daily thru train to San Luis Obispo feature tray meals that are rotated every two weeks and includ for breakfast mushroom omelet, Belgian waffles or spicy burrito. Lunch/dinner have grilled salmon, grilled chicken breast with mushroom sauce and grilled sirloin steak.

March 3 was the 50th anniversary of the saving of San Francisco cable cars from oblivion, when bureaucrats had tried to junk the system.

San Francisco's Public Transportation commission voted in late Feb on a contract to extend the F historic streetcar line farther towards the Ferry Bldg.

San Jose opened its 34th light rail station on Feb 24, on Tasman Blvd. From there, the planned Tasman Rail Project will take the line to Mountain View. The Light Rail's farebox recovery in 1996 was 15%, the lowest rate of any Bay Area rail system. BART's was 56%, CalTrain 40%, SF Muni rail 33%, reported the SF Chronicle.

A woman apparently suffered an epileptic seizure at BART's Union City station Feb 19, fell onto the tracks and was fatally injured by a train.

A bill has been introduced into the Washington State legislature that would require all actions by the new RTA transit board to be also approved by cities and counties. The bill is seen as a retaliatory move by pro-highway forces, still hurting from the Nov 1996 57% "yes" vote at the polls for the commuter train/light rail/express bus issue.

Proposed discontinuance of the Anacortes to Sidney BC ferry line by Washington State ferries is generating major resistance in both terminal cities. It's an Amtrak-like situation: the Washington system doesn't "like" the run, so despite big increases in population and tourism, the line is showing "declines" in patronage as ferry p-r executives tell the public: "Our mission is not hauling tourists"—statements that generate howls of protest.

Hearings were held in early March in Olympia WA on plans to build a fourth new jumbo ferry for $84 million without bidding at the Todds Shipyard, which is having financial problems on its existing three-ferry contract. Names for the three ferries being built are: *Tacoma, Puyuallup* and *Wenatchee*.

Union Pacific announced it will build 50 miles of new double track in the Blue Mountains of NE Oregon—Amtrak's **Pioneer** route. UP is seeing big runups in business. In mid-Feb, UP carloadings were running 8% above the same 1996 period.

San Francisco Muni is fielding heavy numbers of complaints about excessive "incoming-missile"-like whining noise from new Breda LRV-type streetcars. Muni manager Emilio Cruz said Muni is working on the problem.

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A stop not in the timetable? For several years now, for groups of 15 or more passengers, the **San Joaquin** trains have been making stops at Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park (CNL). It is located on the west side of the tracks at railroad mile post 932.3 between Wasco and Corcoran CA, 14mins north of Wasco. The only California community to be funded, financed and governed by black Americans, it was named in honor of the first black US Army colonel. Advance arrangements must be made with the State Parks by calling 805-248-6692 in order to have a ranger/guide available. (The office is at Ft. Tejon, which manages the area.)

Metrolink now offers Saturday service between Lancaster/Santa Clarita and L.A., providing connections with Amtrak services at LAUS.

The proposal has been made that the **Sunset Limited**, trains 1&2, stop at Palm Springs CA and Maricopa AZ, but no confirmation was in the Amtrak computer as of March 7.

Improved Nava-Hopi bus schedules effective Apr 6 will see better connections between Flagstaff and Phoenix AZ with trains 3&4, the **Southwest Chief**. Passengers can have daily service L.A. to Phoenix via Flagstaff in place of traveling via Tucson three days a week. Service between Flagstaff and Williams AZ (the Grand Canyon Railway connection) resumes Apr 6 also. —Ed Von Nordeck.

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San Francisco Chronicle reported Mar 7 that BART and the airlines that use SF Airport have reached an agreement on their relative financial contributions to the $1.2 billion project to bring BART to the airport. There had been a long period of strong disagreement over this. The agreement calls for BART to pay $2.5 million annually in rent for 50 years to the airlines and to provide a 25% fare discount to airline employees. The airlines agreed to contribute $113 million to the project, or a maximum of $7.5 million per year. The airport itself will also contribute through such means as concession fees and cost reductions.

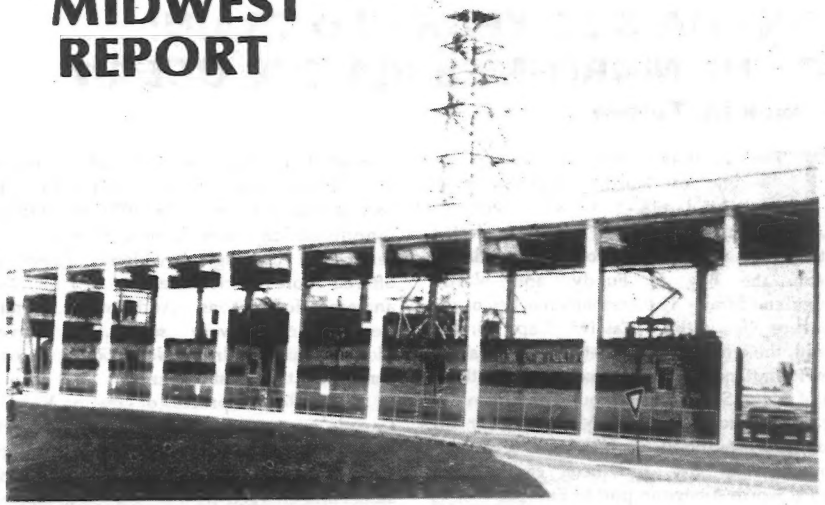
Yosemite Valley will re-open at noon Mar 14 and Amtrak bus connections to the park will run again starting Mar 15. At first only buses will be allowed to enter the valley, according to reports. We plan a report on this next issue. (While the park was closed to traffic, some employees worked on cleanup there. One of them told the *Oakland Tribune* [Mar 9] that "One of the most incredible things about being here like this is that there is no bus noise. It's truly been one of the most incredible times of my life".)

The takeover of the **Capitol** trains from Caltrans by the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Board is still set for July 1, reported Train Riders Association of California, although the Board and the state badly missed their Dec 31 deadline for signing an interagency agreement. Issues still being debated were mainly ones of financial liability. TRAC said that the Board hopes to initiate a fifth train on Aug 1, but that UP has not been approached on that matter yet. The Board also is studying improving connections between BART and the **Capitols**, including consideration of a new station at the West Oakland BART station. FY 97 has seen the **Capitols** increase ridership 38% and revenues 31%. TRAC noted that on-time performance is over 70% in spite of ongoing trackwork between Emeryville and Sacramento to improve service.

The San Diegans will get four new stops in 1997: Carpinteria (platform ready in April, at Linden Ave & 5th St, site of 1887 SP depot, two blocks to Carpinteria State Beach); Goleta Station (soon after Carpinteria opens, easy bike ride to UC Santa Barbara, equipment layover site for **San Diegans**); Surf (this summer, 5-10mins west of Lompoc); and Guadalupe (this summer, in heart of downtown, minutes from city of Santa Maria). All stations will be handicapped-accessible.

The California Zephyr, train 5, arrived in Oakland Feb 23 carrying deadheading Amtrak full-dome lounge 9301, ex-GN "Mountain View", to be delivered to the NW Pacific RR, which is leasing it and two similar domes to put with other domes on its excursion service. The train, 17 cars long, included two other private cars and three locomotives.

MIDWEST REPORT



AIRPORT TRAIN: America's last interurban, the South Shore line, enjoys increased patronage and service since it was extended three miles to Michiana Regional Airport in 1992 and additional Sumitomo/Nippon Sharyo cars were delivered. The South Shore fleet numbers 58 cars, serving its 90-mile route out of Chicago. The photo here was taken at South Bend Airport Jun 5, 1995 by long-time traction photographer Bill Janssen, submitted by Don Scott.

Amtrak Intercity spokesman Marc Magliari, commenting on the *Rocky Mountain News'* false report of the **Pioneer's** demise in March rather than May (see report on p. 16), told ColoRail's Bob Rynerson that actually the AP bureau in Cheyenne was partly to blame for the error: "A story ran in the [Mar 6] edition of the *Wyoming Eagle* in Cheyenne that was based in part on the previous Saturday's Denver Post story. A writer in the AP bureau in Cheyenne 'picked up' that Eagle story and rewrote it. Unfortunately, the rewrite was in error and used March 15 as the last day of service instead of calling March 15 the deadline we had given the state [for coming up with funding].

"Still worse, the rewrite put the March 15 train-off date in my mouth. The rewrite did accurately quote a p-r person from the Wyoming DOT as saying they could not support Amtrak and the **Pioneer** because Amtrak 'is a private, for-profit organization,' which was apparently in the original *Eagle* story.

"The papers in both Casper and Rawlings called me as soon as the AP story hit and I was able to assure them of the facts and work with the Cheyenne AP bureau to get a correction out by 6pm MT, including our public, government corporation status. Your AP contact did not dig deep enough in his queue to see the original erroneous story.

"The *RMN* apparently locked up the regional news section too early to get the corrected AP story and missed its filing [6pm for the next morning's final edition]. Both [ColoRail president] Jon Esty and I have called the *RMN* city desk and I fully expect a correction in Sunday's paper."

The Three Rivers, trains 40 & 41, will once more serve Nappanee IN, Fostoria OH and Youngstown OH, beginning with the May 11 timetable change. Train 40 will reach Nappanee at 11:15pm, Fostoria at 2:42am and Youngstown at 5:40am, while the corresponding times for train 41 will be 5:12am, 3:50am and 1am.

Illinois Governor Edgar gave final approval Feb 14 to a bill that lets the state DOT look for operators other than Amtrak to provide intercity service in the state.

Toledo train advocate Mike Ferner writes on the Internet: " 'I'm on my way to Chicago. And I'm goin' on a train,' President Clinton told a cheering crowd outside Columbus OH en route to the Democratic convention. That train carried Mr. Clinton to Toledo on his way to Chicago, and I'm glad the President of the United State came to my hometown. I'd just like to ask him: why can't the rest of us take a train to our state capital? I'm not arguing against presidential perks or that taxpayers should be able to fly on Air Force One. I just want to be able to take a train to Columbus like my father could. I'd like to ask Mr. Clinton why he supports the notion that America should be the only industrialized nation that refuses to subsidize its passenger rail system. I'd like to ask him how many more billions of dollars and how many more lives will we pay to protect 'our' Persian Gulf oil when Amtrak collapses..."

CANADA'S 92-YEAR-OLD TRAIN: TO THE MARITIMES VIA THE *OCEAN*

By Jack M. Turner

The Canadian province of Nova Scotia is one of North America's most delightful places to visit with its seemingly endless coastline dotted with fishing villages that border the Atlantic Ocean, the Bay of Fundy, and Northumberland Strait. The northern reaches of the province lie within massive Cape Breton Island, the embarkation point for ferryboats to Newfoundland. Standing near the southern tip of Nova Scotia is Yarmouth, the terminus for ferries from Portland, Maine. Near the province's midpoint is Halifax, the largest Nova Scotian city, provincial capital, and closest North American port to Europe.

Halifax's relative proximity to Europe has historically been the major reason for the Canadian National Railway's significant role in moving goods between Halifax and the rest of Canada. Construction on both ends of the Halifax to Montreal line began in the 1850s with the middle part of the route completed by the mid-1870s. The CN main line runs in a generally westerly and northwesterly direction from Halifax to Montreal where it connects with CN and rival Canadian Pacific lines to the Canadian heartland and west coast.

The Montreal to Halifax route also has a rich tradition for fine passenger train service. The first through passenger train from Halifax arrived in Levis, Quebec on July 6, 1876. Twenty-eight years later, on July 3, 1904, the *Ocean Limited* made its inaugural run between Montreal and Halifax. For many of its early years the *Ocean* was an all-sleeper train while a companion train, the *Scotian*, handled coach passengers. Displaying its commitment to the tourist trade, the Canadian National constructed plush hotels (the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal and the Hotel Nova Scotian in Halifax) at both ends of *the Ocean/Scotian* route. In the mid-1960s CN made a further attempt to attract customers by equipping the *Ocean* and the Scotian with unique skyview observation cars acquired from the Milwaukee Road along with a variety of coaches and sleepers.

For a short period in 1968 and 1969 the *Ocean* was routed on a southerly line through Edmundston, New Brunswick while the *Scotian* continued on the traditional route through Mont Joli The Edmundston routing was slightly faster than the Mont Joli line but served fewer towns. In 1972 the railroad introduced dayniters, a new class of coach service for overnight travelers. These cars offered more spacious seating and increased amenities for patrons. Additionally, through sleeping cars were scheduled between Montreal and Sydney, Nova Scotia using a connecting train east of Truro.

In 1977 the process of creating VIA Rail Canada began with VIA first established as a subsidiary of Canadian National. In April 1978 VIA was granted Crown Corporation status and charged with the complete takeover of passenger equipment and services including the *Ocean* and the *Scotian*. On October 28, 1979 the *Scotian* was dropped from the VIA timetable while a former Canadian Pacific train, the *Atlantic Limited,* was extended eastward from its terminus of St. John, New Brunswick to Halifax.

Under the auspices of VIA Rail Canada, passenger service between Montreal and Halifax has continued to thrive despite changes necessitated by politics and economics. These changes had the greatest effect on passenger service operating on Canadian Pacific trackage through Maine and southern New Brunswick. Throughout its existence under the VIA banner, the *Atlantic* route was targeted for elimination by budget cutters. The route was actually dropped from the VIA system in November 1981 but was resurrected on June 1, 1985 thanks in large part to political pressure from the city of St. John, New Brunswick and rail advocates across Canada. The route died a presumably final death on December 17,1994 as the CP line across Maine was listed for abandonment and/or sale to short line operators.

Despite the periods of uncertainty surrounding the *Atlantic* route, VIA's *Ocean* continued to ply the CN rails as the eastern flagship of Canada's rail passenger system. During its time of sharing Montreal-Halifax duties with the *Atlantic,* the *Ocean* operated three times per week on alternate days from the *Atlantic.* Since that train's termination, the *Ocean* has resumed six days per week service, departing Montreal and Halifax daily except Tuesdays. During 1994 the thrice-weekly *Ocean* carried 122,558 passengers compared to the *Atlantic's* 100,745 riders on its three days per week schedule. By the end of October 1995, the *Ocean* had totaled in excess of 200,000 passengers, placing it on target to surpass the prior year's combined ridership totals for the *Atlantic* and the *Ocean.*

Today's *Ocean* has established itself as one of North America's greatest trains and, at 92 years, is Canada's longest continuously-operating train. The *Ocean*'s equipment was recently refurbished and typically includes between three and seven coaches, a skyline dome-snack bar, dining car, several sleepers, and a dome-observation sleeping car. The first class section of the *Ocean* is regularly assigned at least five sleepers with additional cars added as warranted by demand. On an October 1995 trip, for example, this writer noted eight sleepers on the eastbound run and nine on the return to Montreal. The length of the consist for any given day is adjusted based upon reservation demand.

Equipment for the *Ocean* went through VIA's head end power conversion program in 1993. In VIA parlance for HEP conversion, these cars were *hepped.* This process included the total stripping of the cars' interiors and rebuilding by AMF Technotransport in Montreal. The result of the rebuilding process is a beautiful matched set of stainless silver cars that reflect VIA's commitment to providing a pleasant travel experience. Because of their stainless steel exteriors, former Canadian Pacific cars now comprise the entire VIA long distance fleet.

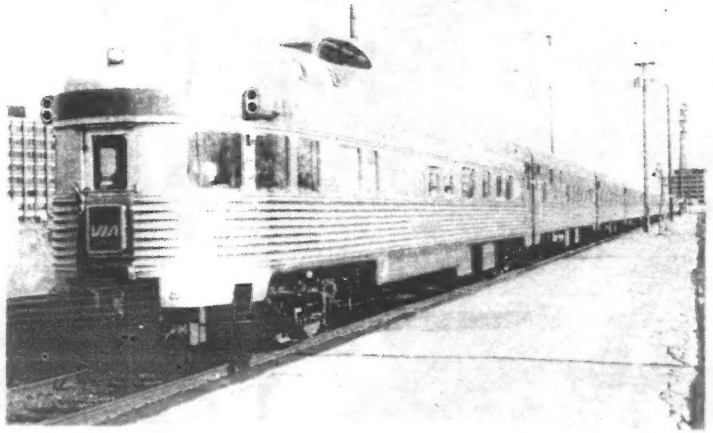
Locomotive power for the *Ocean* has routinely consisted of a pair of F40PH-2 engines since the mid-1980s. Before that time, venerable FPA engines inherited from CN generally held down the Montreal to Halifax assignment.

The *Ocean's* coaches contain spacious seating that provides ample legroom similar to that offered in former dayniter service. Other new coach amenities include redesigned reading lamps above each seat and glass partitions that each contain a model train engine or car embedded within the glass.

Like the coaches, the interiors of VIA's refurbished sleeping cars appear cool and spacious with various shades of green and pale jade giving the cars a pleasant feel. The *Ocean's* sleepers come from the *Chateau* series, a group of 29 former Canadian Pacific cars (such as *Chateau Dollard and Chateau Marquette)* that each contained 8 duplex roomettes, 3 bedrooms, 4 sections, and one drawing room. During their recent makeover, one of the sections was removed from each car and replaced by a shower and dressing room. A sturdy safety glass door keeps water inside the shower stall rather than on the dressing room floor.

Sleeping cars on the *Ocean* are designated as *Easterly Class,* a moniker that plays upon the down east character of the Maritime provinces. With the exception of the shower, the layout of the *Chateau* cars remains essentially unchanged from their original configuration. Each car's drawing room and three bedrooms are located in the center of the car for better riding comfort, with roomettes and sections at either end.

By day, the bedrooms feature a pair of movable reclining chairs. At nighttime, these are folded up and stowed below the lower berth. An upper berth is lowered into place from its storage space near the ceiling.



Dome observation car *Banff Park* carries the markers as the eastbound *Ocean* pauses at Moncton NB.

Drawing rooms, meanwhile, have been given a regal appearance with rose walls and wood accents. Each of these rooms contains a lengthwise sofa and a movable chair by day and one upper and two lower berths at night. Framed reproductions of paintings from VIA's *Transcontinental Collection* grace the walls of all bedrooms and drawing rooms. These paintings feature the works of 16 leading Canadian artists representing different regions.

The roomettes are staggered in duplex fashion with every other pair of rooms a small step above floor level. This conserves space as the bed in each lower room is stored by day beneath the adjacent upper room. The most economical accommodations are sections which provide seating for two during the day and upper and lower berths at night. Although heavy curtains provide the only privacy, this type of accommodation remains very popular on VIA trains.

VIA reservations can now be booked by travel agents in the United States using the Sabre, Worldspan, and Apollo computer systems. Thus, a travel agent who checks the computer for airline schedules and fares between Montreal and Halifax, for example, will find VIA train information as well as airline information for that city pair. Sharp booking increases have already been noted from areas of the U.S. that previously produced few VIA riders. To make accommodation designations more user friendly for travel agents, VIA has redesignated sections as *semi-private* compartments, roomettes as *single bedrooms*, traditional bedrooms as *double bedrooms*, and drawing rooms as *triple bedrooms*.

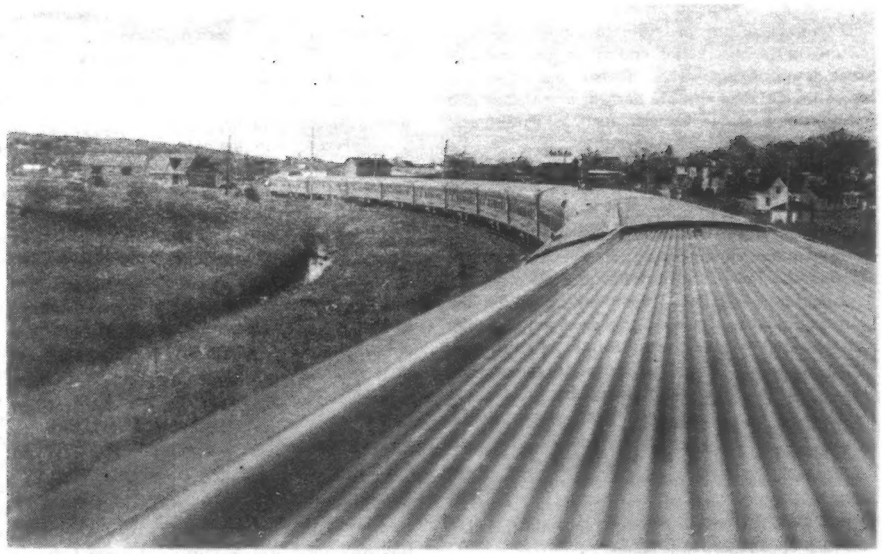
Easterly Class passengers are greeted to their rooms by a handsome welcome aboard packet that describes the train's facilities and invites sleeping car passengers to explore the train. A shower kit containing soap, shampoo, a bath towel, and bath mat awaits in each passenger's sleeping accommodation.

The *Ocean's* dining car serves full meals from an extensive and varied menu. The dinner menu offers standard dining car selections from the beef, poultry, and seafood groups as well as lighter fare such as hot open face roast beef sandwiches served with French fries and peas. The extensive dessert menu includes items such as apple crisp, brownies, carrot cake, and ice cream. Typifying VIA Rail Canada's attention to detail is the first call for dinner which comes at 7pm, just as the eastbound train pulls out of Montreal.

The interiors of the dining cars are decorated in pastel shades and are subtly but effectively lighted. Individual chairs at each table for four harken back to a time when booth-style seating was reserved for less formal settings. Glass partitions similar to those in the coaches are adorned with etched images of birds such as the chickadee and the kingfisher. These dining cars were named for CP hotels and public rooms within those hotels (*Acadian, Frontenac, Palliser,* etc.) and still bear their original names on their exteriors.

Lighter fare is available from a takeout counter on the lower level of the Skyline dome car, located near the front of the train. This car offers fast food convenience and is open throughout the night. The Skyline car's placement in the forward part of the *Ocean* allows coach passengers a welcome retreat from their seats. Lounge areas are situated at either end of the downstairs level.

At the rear of the *Ocean* is the majestic *Park* car which contains three bedrooms and a drawing room in one half of the lower level,



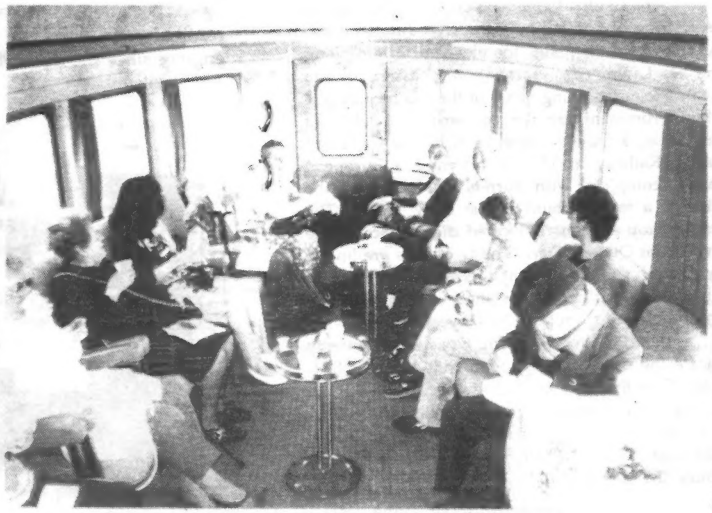
Above: From a dome car view, the **Ocean's** eight sleepers are seen as the eastbound train passes through Amherst NS.

Below, left: The author's son, John, joins other diners for dinner in dining car *Acadian* as the **Ocean** departs Montreal.

Below, center: Easterly Class passengers enjoy a Continental breakfast in the Bullet Lounge area of the *Evangeline Park* car en route from Halifax to Montreal.

Below, right: The eastern terminus for the **Ocean** is VIA's former CN station in Halifax.

Photos by the author.



the renowned *Mural Lounge* in the center, the *Bullet Lounge* in the observation end at the rear, and a 24 seat dome on top. These classic cars also came from the CP fleet and are named for national and provincial parks in Canada such as Banff Park, Evangeline Park, and Kokanee Park.

The bulkhead of each *Park* car's *Mural Lounge* originally housed a mural that was commissioned by the Canadian Pacific. When the cars were refurbished, the murals were removed and restored, then placed in the Museum of Science and Technology in Ottawa. New paintings commissioned by VIA were then placed on the forward bulkhead of the *Mural Lounges*. A small bar also stands within the confines of the *Mural Lounge* and is the gathering place for sleeper passengers to receive complimentary soft drinks. In the evening, feature movies are shown in the *Mural Lounge* as well. The *Bullet Lounge is* named for the shape of the observation end of the *Park* cars and contains comfortable seating for over a dozen guests as well as a writing desk. A set of clocks mounted above the desk indicate the time for each of Canada's time zones.

Complimentary Continental breakfast is available for *Easterly Class* passengers in the *Bullet Lounge* throughout much of the morning. Seating in the dome, meanwhile, is enhanced by the spotless front, side, and rear windows that provide an unobstructed view of the train's progress between Montreal and the Maritimes.

Taking A Ride On The *Ocean*

It is a typically chilly autumn evening as the *Ocean* departs from Montreal's mammoth Gare Centrale (Central Station), located below the Queen Elizabeth Hotel. My son John reflects upon our last visit to Montreal three years earlier when we saw Boris Yeltsin at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel. As he greeted onlookers, Yeltsin had paused and picked John up while the cameras recorded the moment. The passage of time has seen the Russian president fighting political and health battles much the same as North America's passenger railroad corporations have had to fight for survival each year.

As the *Ocean* leaves the cavernous station, the city's skyline appears to the rear of the train. Behind the highrises is Mont Royal, which overlooks the city's north side. The rail line branching to the right is VIA's route to Ottawa and Toronto and hosts northbound remote services to Cochrane and Jonquiere. Ahead lies the Pont Victoria Bridge which carries our train across the impressive St. Lawrence River. This river crossing was opened to rail traffic on December 12, 1859. Near the river's south bank, the railroad passes above a series of locks that permit oceangoing ships to navigate the St. Lawrence Seaway en route to the Great Lakes.

Exiting the Pont Victoria Bridge, the *Ocean* makes its first stop to serve suburban Saint Lambert, whose attractive downtown area is visible on the left. The route used by Amtrak's *Adirondack* bears off to the right four minutes later at Cannon. That route also handled the *Montrealer* until its demise in 1995.

Fifteen minutes east of Saint Lambert, the train makes a scenic crossing of the Richelieu River then passes through the town of Saint Hilaire. Mont Saint Hilaire stands watch over the village and farmlands to the right. Ten minutes east of the next stop, Saint Hyacinthe, the former route of the *Atlantic* bears off to the right near Saint Rosalie.

Farmlands encompass the right-of-way for much of the next thirty minutes to Drummondville where the Saint Francois River is bridged. The next two hours are prime dome car time as the summer sun will set behind the train revealing a surreal scene of the farms, tiny hamlets, and occasional Canadian National freight trains. A large golden moon rises ahead of the train as if to point the way to Halifax. The surrounding land gradually becomes more populous as the railway parallels Highway 20, the principal south shore highway route from Montreal to Quebec City.

Eighty minutes east of Drummondville, the railroad crosses high above the Chaudiere River then passes West Jct. where the freight line diverges from the route used by the *Ocean* through Levis. Momentarily, the train pauses to pick up passengers at suburban Chamy where VIA's corridor route to Quebec City branches off to the left. Those of us riding in one of the two dome cars are rewarded with spectacular views of majestic Quebec City on the left, across the St. Lawrence River. Only a few passengers are awake to enjoy this magnificent view as many have already retired for the night. Though the train is filled to capacity, there seems to always be an open seat in the dome atop the *Banff Park*.

The lights of Quebec's suburbs first appear as a string of pearls lining the river's north bank. As the *Ocean* navigates the elevated terrain along the St. Lawrence's south shore, passengers are treated to outstanding views of the Quebec skyline. Most prominent are the copper-roofed Chateau Frontenac, a majestic hotel built by the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1893 to resemble a European castle, complete with turrets. Nearby is the Citadel, a fortress built in the early 1800s. The station stop at Levis is located directly across the river from Quebec City. The two cities are linked by a ferryboat that docks at a terminal connected to VIA's Levis station. This station was built in 1884 and purchased from the CN 100 years later.

Shortly after departing Levis we reluctantly vacate the dome for a good night's sleep in Bedroom C in the *Chateau Dollard* The excellent renovation of the sleeping car makes it easy to imagine I am aboard the *Canadian* in the heyday of its Canadian Pacific operation. During the overnight hours the *Ocean* calls upon numerous villages,

(continued on page 19)

The Girl in Economy 4

By Robert W. Rynerson

Always in my mind on clear, starry nights there will be the five-year old girl in Economy 4 ... looking out into the Idaho vastness.

Amtrak's Train 26, The Pioneer, Economy Room 4, in Superliner sleeper 2635 was empty out of Portland when I first passed its open door. Crisp, clean sheets were folded away-- chairs empty, unlike in other rooms, already occupied for Boise, Borie, Galesburg or Denver. Manifest was not terribly full on this cold February day: Steinbergs in the Family Room, Hettricks in Deluxe B, Vern in Economy 13, Ms. Trubey in Economy 5, others whom I never knew by name. But Economy 4 was held for someone special.

I saw Lisa on the platform when we slid to a stop in The Dalles--Lisa and her mother, on their way home to Holdrege, as I later learned, 1684 miles over the Blue Mountains, along the Snake, across the desert, up past Devil's Slide, startling the antelope across the plains. We were tablemates that night; that's how I learned their story--over a good American dinner, not too fancy, but real food. Lisa munched on a hamburger while her mother told me about their trip. She was well-behaved--squealed just once when she spotted a deer alongside the track as we climbed the Blues.

"I wanted Lisa to have this trip. I bought it for her." Her mother had an odd way of talking about what might seem to others like it should be a simple business transaction.

"The government... Bill Clinton, Newt Gingrich... they want this train to die. I wanted Lisa to know what this country is like. To have some memory of it."

Gently I inquired--wanted to find out what she meant, told her with some amusement that she didn't seem very partisan about it. "It isn't about political parties!" She was emphatic about that. "While they're talking at us about who's sleeping in the White House bedroom or how the TV shows should be rated, they've worked out a quiet deal between themselves back there that will stop this train forever. It's a part of our family's life that they're stealing."

How did she mean that? "Our family's like a lot of them in this country... scattered westward. Lisa's dad lives in The Dalles, trying to make an orchard grow on those dry hills. Lisa and I live with my mom in Holdrege now." A wistful tone touched her voice, and I asked no more questions of her.

"I'm going to ride this train lots when I grow up!" Lisa filled in the awkward quiet spot in our conversation. The sun had set on the mountains now, and the brief glow at our stop in Baker City had vanished. Lisa, now bubbling with information about her trip, filled the dull spot in both our hearts. She would take the train herself, like the big girls she had seen riding in the coach. She would learn to help Daddy with the trees in the summer, but she always would come home to Holdrege.

Her mother and I looked at each other in silence. How could one explain to a child that this comfortable, convenient and enjoyable steel cord between her families was about to be cut? It wouldn't make sense.

It might have made more sense if we could have told her that some airline wanted to fly her quickly to see her father, or that some bus line would run between Holdrege, Nebraska and The Dalles, Oregon. But that does not happen and is not going to happen. Government officials expect her to drive alone on icy roads over the mountains, just as soon as she is able. Until then, she'll mostly stay in Holdrege. The train easily picks up Lisa and her mother-- took only a couple of minutes out of our trip to gather them up and get on our way. We were blessed by their presence with us on our journey. No one else wants them.

After Nyssa flashed by and before the Nampa stop, I passed by and saw that the door to Economy 4 was open. Lisa's mom had opened it to get a bit more room while unpacking for the night. Berths were in place, and Lisa was in her pj's, peeking out from under the covers, propped up with the pillow. With lights turned down and shade half-up, she watched intently out the window. Then she saw my reflection on the glass, lit by the corridor lamps.

"Mister Rynerson," she struggled with the name, fighting sleep. "You know what? This land goes on forever and ever. I could just stay on this train and ride it there."

Her mother smiled and tucked her in.

"This land needs the train." She paused for a moment. "And, I'd say, the train needs

this land." She grinned at the unexpected pun and slid shut the door of Economy 4.

America needs The Pioneer!

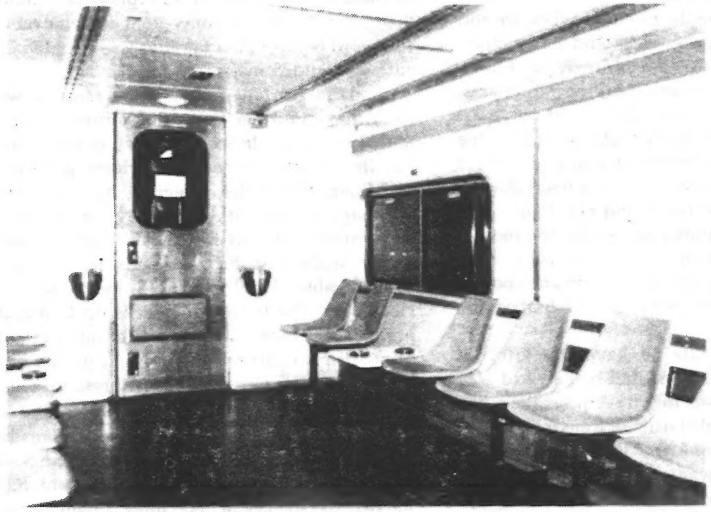
This is Lisa's story as best as I can tell it. Of course, the names are changed for privacy reasons-- but on Lincoln's Birthday, 1997, most of these folks really did set out across the continent on Amtrak's Train 26 in the "SEA-CHI" sleeper. Perhaps for their last time?

Maybe so, maybe not! Enough words from the public out here in "flyover country" and our leaders may look down from their jets and make that Federal budget adjustment needed to keep trains rolling clear across America. Of course, it will help if you contact your member of Congress and write to the President, at The White House, Washington, DC 20500. Some of us in Colorado have gotten together to work on this-- write to us at: ColoRail, P.O. Box 480452, Denver, CO 80248. We'll get you on the mailing list that we're putting together. Thanks, and see you on the train!

Editor's note: The above is the text of a flyer that ColoRail has begun using. Said the author, "Up to now, all the hand-outs at train stations have been very logical and appeal to rational thought. This attempts to get at some of the other reasons for needing trains."

Typeset copies of this story are available by mail or fax at no charge from the ColoRail address given above, or at this fax number: (303) 299-2723. These can be used for producing photocopies for your own public distribution. Or copy the above article from RTN.

MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS



The first photo we've seen of the interior of an Amtrak Superliner coach-smoker is shown at left. Gene Poon risked his lungs to enter the smoking room, which is downstairs in the former baggage room, and photograph it for RTN. Note that all surfaces are smooth and easily cleaned. The train was the **Desert Wind** at Salt Lake City on Feb 14.

A false end to the **Pioneer** was reported by the Scripps chain tabloid *Rocky Mountain News* on Mar 7, as follows: "Cheyenne—Amtrak passenger rail service through Wyoming likely will end March 15, nearly two months before federal funds subsidizing the service will be cut off." The story was attributed to unnamed "Staff and wire reports" under the Regional News Briefing logo.

If true, the story would be the first hint of a scheme to commit one of railroading's most spectacular and rarely practiced acts" cutting off a passenger service on such short notice that customers are left stranded. Wording of the article hinted at a big question for taxpayers: where was the federal money going when Amtrak's **Pioneer** would get the axe prematurely?

Stranger yet—attempts to check it kept running into dead-ends—nothing on the knowledgeable CompuServe on-line forums. Nothing in either Denver daily the next morning. No messages from contacts in other states. To top it off, Amtrak gents were calmly booking passengers through their 1-800-USA RAIL number for dates after Mar 15. Passengers were told that the **Pioneer** will be dropped in May.

"We're very concerned that this be either corrected or verified," stressed Jon Esty, president of ColoRail, when I called him about the story. Esty's group lobbies on behalf of Colorado rail passengers. "This train doesn't just affect Wyoming. It serves Denver, Greeley and Fort Morgan in Colorado as well. If people think it isn't running after Mar 15, they'll miss out on travel opportunities and Amtrak will be denied much-needed revenue." Esty planned to ask the *News* to "get the story straight."

The next morning, with no correction in the *News*, I pounced on staffer Ward Marchant of the Denver Associated Press bureau. If the *News* had not corrected the story, then the AP must have muddled it, I told him. It was unlikely that any other unnamed wire service could be the source of an items from Cheyenne. Puzzled, Marchant pulled up the original AP wire story. It gave Mar 15 as the cut-off date for state governments to come up with a plan to replace withdrawn federal support. It also gave May 10 as the date for rail service to end. The *News* had not only switched date in a manner that could damage Amtrak's revenue by curtailing reservation requests, but had also interpolated its own raised eyebrow in the comment about cutting the service before the money runs out.

The *News* also completely missed covering the story scooped earlier by Kit Miniclier of the *Denver Post* that Amtrak was discussing alternative ways of supporting Colorado-Wyoming service through increasing mail and express revenues. That rumor had circulated for over a month and had been denied by some officials in Washington DC. Miniclier tracked down authoritative quotes and provided the general public with its first-ever background on the issues raised.

I apologized to Marchant of the AP for having suspected them of botching the report. (He avoided saying the *News* was wrong; but the AP story matched what Amtrak is telling its customers, and did not contain the inference of wrong-doing or mismanagement that colored the *News* version.) I should have recalled what Oliver Grammling wrote of the Scripps fiasco known as the False Armistice 80 years ago: when told later that the State Dept had released news of the real World War armistice being signed, an elderly lady caller to a news editor said: "Oh, pshaw! *Does the Associated Press say it?*"

—Bob Rynerson.

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The current discounted Special Explore America fares have a new wrinkle: they exclude travel to or from Florida even on the **Sunset Limited**, which has suffered ridership drops in recent months. Yet, passengers can use these fares on the same trains if they board or detrain at points outside Florida such as Jesup or Savannah GA or Mobile AL. If the rationale is that the Florida trains are so popular (not the case on the **Sunset** since it was truncated to Sanford), why is space sold at the lower rate to anybody on these trains? Is it not discrimination against Florida? And will this trend include the popular **California Zephyr** in some future year?—Jack Turner.

The next timetable change for Amtrak is May 11. At that time, the **California Zephyr**, trains 5&6, will begin serving Green River, Utah (GRI) instead of Thompson, Utah, gateway to the Arches and Canyonlands National Parks. Green River was provided $26,000 by the state of Utah to assist in constructing facilities for the stop. Located 27 miles west of Thompson, the location will be near lodging and food facilities, unlike the situation with the Thompson stop. Don't confuse this stop with Green River, Wyoming, used by the **Pioneer**. The **California Zephyr** will no longer stop at Lovelock NV. The reasons given were very low ridership and no facilities at all. The last trains to stop will be train 5 that lvs Chicago May 9 and train 6 that lvs Oakland May 10. The nearest stops to Lovelock are Winnemucca NV (73mis east) and Sparks NV (98mis west).

Train 6 will lv Oakland 1hr, 45mins later, allowing a connection from the San Joaquin Valley with train 711 at Martinez, in place of using a train-bus combo via Stockton/Sacramento. The new schedule is shorter and cuts out about 40mins dwell time at Denver and Salt Lake City, with the assumption that the **Pioneer** will not connect there. Train 5 will lv Chicago at the same time, 3:05pm, but reach Oakland at 5:15pm, 25mins earlier.

The **Empire Builder**, train 7, will depart Chicago earlier, at 1:20pm rather than 3:15, resulting in better times at Minneapolis and Glacier Park. Its 9am arrival in Seattle (now 10:30) will allow a connection to the **Coast Starlight**. The Portland section will reach that city at 8:50am instead of 10:15. Trains 8 & 28 have no end point time changes, but small changes (up to 6mins) at intermediate points.

The **Crescent**, train 20, will leave New Orleans and Atlanta 25mins earlier.

The **Cardinal**, train 51, will leave Washington 30mins later. (See also p. 9 for more changes.)

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Amtrak's Roadrailers, all 13 of them, were taken out of service in late Feb due to instability problems at high speeds. They were sent to the manufacturer for modifications.

The RegioSprinter began demonstration runs and displays March 1 in Tampa, at the city's month-long Rail Fest.

Federal RR Administration proposed new rules Feb 24 on passenger train safety. They would require railroads to mark and inspect coach emergency exits, while commuter lines must conduct emergency simulations on each major route every two years, at least. Amtrak would have to do so six times a year. See Feb 24 *Federal Register*.

"The Desert Wind is dead" is the current buzz among rail observers. But the biggest topic of discussion this month is the fate of the **Pioneer**. On Feb 22 the public meeting in Pendelton OR drew Amtrak's Tom Downs and various Oregon public officials. The following summary is from WashARP: Downs said Congress and the President are cutting Amtrak's operating grant faster than anticipated and not providing the capital investment that had been promised. He said Amtrak and Texas are close to a deal to continue the **Texas Eagle** thru Sep 30. OR, ID and WY all claim financial difficulties when asked about helping fund the **Pioneer**. Amtrak needs by Mar 15 a financial commitment to continue the train thru Sep 30. Mail and express contracts might kick in after that to help fund the train. Downs left halfway thru the meeting [end of summary].

Amtrak is considering turning the **Pioneer** into a coach-only train, with mail and express, and running it Portland-Boise-Cheyenne-Ames, Iowa-Chicago, the whole route on the UP. Downs said the railroad is not happy about the mail/express idea, and that Amtrak may have to get a Surface Transportation Board ruling on it. But other sources said the UP had already approved the train. All this could not start as early as May 11, so Amtrak is asking the state for interim funding, until Sep 30. WashARP called the all-coach train "not acceptable".

NARP reported that six Senators were circulating in early March a letter in the Senate asking colleagues to join a bipartisan intercity passenger rail caucus.

On Congressional action on Amtrak, NARP reported the following Mar 7: "The Administration still has not delivered its draft ISTEA bill to the Congress, even though DOT Secretary Slater appeared at two hearings last week that were called to discuss the phantom bill. He did say the Administration will keep highway and transit spending levels flat over a 6-year period. It's also known that the draft contains flexibility for states to spend some of their federal money on intercity passenger rail if they choose.

"Secretary Slater appeared before the Senate Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee yesterday while chairman Richard Shelby of AL did not mention Amtrak once. Ranking member Frank Lautenberg of NJ did so emphatically. Slater responded that Amtrak has to be part of our 21st Century transportation system. He said the Administration is struggling with how to fund Amtrak and that he does not want to see more service lost. That means that even though the President's budget came out a month ago, the Administration's final position on Amtrak remains unclear. It might change for the better due to public reaction to the bad treatment Amtrak got in the President's budget."

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Amtrak discontinued one of its two sleepers on the **Pioneer** in early Feb, through May 10. Amtrak's computer in early Feb showed no sleeper space at all available on the train through May 10.

For the month of March, on a test basis, Amtrak changed its hold policy for reserved trains, except Metroliners. There used to be 14 days in which a passenger could pay for his ticket (7 for Florida trains), but that changed to seven, except for three for the **Crescent** and an incredible one day for the **Capitol -SW Chief!**

A special move by Amtrak lvs Chicago Mar 12 over Chicago Central/IC to Ft. Dodge, then Mar 13 to Council Bluffs, then to Des Moines or Newton and back to Chicago.

10% airline ticket tax resumed in early March.

Severe flooding on the Ohio River disrupted service on the **Cardinal** between Cincinnati & Ashland KY in early March.

A special train DC-Harrisburg was ridden by 220 Congressmen & families March 7.

News in this issue is updated through Mar 11, 1997.
Next issue: Gene Poon rides the threatened **Desert Wind** and **Pioneer**.
Page 3 is numbered as page 22 in error.
RTN has a new, easier-to-remember E-mail address which is: rtn@trainweb.com
but you may also use our previous address, rtnews1@ix.netcom.com
as they both go to the same place. We expect to be able to announce our Web site next issue.
Rail Fantrips will appear again next issue.

MORE MIDWEST NEWS:

The Chicago sun-Times reported Mar 11 that some DuPage County board members, mayors and other elected officials will try to add a new light rail line along the Illinois Central to the Chicago Area Transportation Study's 2020 Regional Transportation Plan. The new 18-mile line would extend from Elmhurst, at the county's eastern boundary, to South Elgin in Kane County, serving Addison, Carol Stream, Glendale Heights and Bloomingdale. With slight extensions at either end, it could run from the UP (C&NW) station in Elmhurst to the Metra station in Elgin. Officials are concerned that development will soon consume all vacant land across this corridor, including land that could be used for stations and parking lots, without provision for improving existing traffic. No comment yet from Metra or IC, which last year reclaimed the line from Chicago Central. However, IC has increased freight traffic on the previously little-used line (two trains daily + locals) and probably would have public safety concerns about light rail running alongside. —Mike Blaszak.

CARS & CONSISTS

*Texas Eagle, train 21, Chicago Feb 7: engines 820 (P40) & 351 (F40) (both turned at San Antonio to go on #22); [off at St. Louis: 1212, 1272 & 1195 baggage (mail), Horizon cafe/Custom Class 53001, Horizon coaches 54527 & 54541], [turned at San Antonio for #22: Superliner II transition dorm-slpr 39014 & Sup. II slpr 32105 "Oregon"], [thru to L.A. on #1: Sup. slpr 32053 & Sup. coach 34046], [turned at San Antonio for #22: Sup. cars 38065 diner, 33016 lounge & 34004 coach].

*Pioneer, train 25, Denver Feb 17: engines 394 & 324 (F40s); cars 1251 bag, [Chicago-Seattle cars: Superliners 32038 slpr deadhead, 32056 slpr, 34062 coach], 38033 diner, Sup. II transition dorm-slpr 39027.

Below is a complete list of Amtrak's Viewliner cars:

62000	American	View	62018	Meadow	View	62035	Shore	View
62001	Atlantic	View	62019	Metropolitan	View	62036	Skyline	View
62002	Autumn	View	62020	Moonlight	View	62037	Southern	View
62003	Bay	View	62021	Morning	View	62038	Spring	View
62004	Beach	View	62022	Mountain	View	62039	Stream	View
62005	Cape	View	62023	Mystic	View	62040	Summer	View
62006	College	View	62024	National	View	62041	Summit	View
62007	Colonial	View	62025	Northern	View	62042	Sunrise	View
62008	Eagle	View	62026	Ocean	View	62043	Sunset	View
62009	Evening	View	62027	Orchard	View	62044	Sylvan	View
62010	Forest	View	62028	Palisades	View	62045	Tower	View
62011	Gulf	View	62029	Palm	View	62046	Tranquil	View
62012	Harbor	View	62030	Patriot	View	62047	Village	View
62013	Harvest	View	62031	Prairie	View	62048	Wayside	View
62014	Imperial	View	62032	River	View	62049	Winter	View
62015	Island	View	62033	Scenic	View			
62016	Lake	View	62034	Sea	View			
62017	Majestic	View						

VIA'S OCEAN (continued from page 14)

such as LaPocatiere, Riviere-du-Loup, and Trois-Pistoles, whose names manifest their French heritage. At about 2:30 in the morning, the train leaves the St. Lawrence near Mont Joli and charts a southeast course to Matapedia. The *Chaleur* cars bound for Gaspé are removed from the *Ocean* three times per week at Matapedia but today is not one of these days.

Departing Matapedia, the railroad enters the province of New Brunswick as well as the Atlantic Time Zone. We awaken at Campbellton after a solid night's sleep of over seven hours. This rail line seems to be smooth and well paced enough to allow one of the best sleep opportunities on rails. The run from Campbellton through Jacquet River and Petit Rocher to Bathurst offers glimpses of the Baie des Chaleurs, a wide bay separating northern New Brunswick from Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula. It is time for breakfast and we make a satisfactory meal from the fruit and muffins offered in the *Park* car as we watch the railway's trek through the remote, hilly region between Bathurst and Newcastle. Nearing Newcastle, the Miramichi River Valley is visible. The Miramichi River is bridged upon departure from Newcastle adjacent to The Enclosure Provincial Park.

Approaching Moncton, a large Canadian Nation hump yard can be seen on the right at Gort. The former *Atlantic* route to St. John and Montreal joins from the right at nearby Marsh Jct. and the CN line from Edmundston joins on the right at Pacific Jct. The train is serviced during a 20 minute stop in Moncton, affording an excellent opportunity to walk the platform and photograph the train. There is an extremely cold breeze blowing from the north so I take some photos then gladly return to the comfortable climate of our bedroom. Our train's load has been lightened somewhat as passengers bound for Prince Edward Island have detrained at Moncton where they will take a connecting bus to the island province. Aside from its strategic railroad location, Moncton is home to VIA Rail Canada's eastern reservations center.

The first of many tidal mud flats is passed thirty minutes east of Moncton. Many estuaries in the Maritime provinces are home to a unique phenomenon, the tidal bore, in which a single wave or wall of water pushes inland from the funnel shaped Bay of Fundy at high tide. As the *Ocean* passes through the 50,000 acre Tantramar Marshes, an arm of Chignecto Bay can be seen on the right.

Another arm of the bay is visible ten minutes west of Amherst as the train crosses the Missaquash River and slips into Nova Scotia. Fort Beausejour, built by the French in the early 1750s, stands to the left near this point.

The undulating rail fine passes through Springhill Jct., a tiny hamlet located near Springhill, the home town of popular singer Anne Murray. The domes once again are an excellent place to view the railroad's descent east of Springhill Jct. and the subsequent climb through forests and farmlands to Folly Lake where the beautiful Wentworth Valley can be seen below to the left. Not wanting to miss the scenery, we opt for hot dogs and chips from the takeout counter below Skyline Dome 8506. Thoughtfully, VIA has put fold-down tray tables in the dome so we are able to eat while we enjoy the sights.

Arriving in Truro, a wood yard on the right is served by narrow gauge rail cars with tiny wheels. A minute later the former VIA route to Sydney, N S and Cape Breton bears off to the left at a wye. Thirty minutes later the Shubenacadie River is crossed as the *Ocean* rolls through a lovely dairy farming region west of Milford. Soon the scenery on both sides of the train is dominated by a series of pristine lakes beginning with massive Shubenacadie Grand Lake on the left near Sandy Cove. A group of passengers sitting nearby in the dome are obviously from the area as they note their favorite spots as the train snakes its way through this scenic region.

The Annapolis Valley line, which once hosted passenger service to Yarmouth, joins on the right at Windsor Jct. Bedford Quarry, with its mounds of stone, follows on the left. Soon Bedford Basin, which empties into Halifax Harbour and, ultimately, the Atlantic Ocean appears on the left. The serpentine rail route along this wide body of water allows views of fishing boats and bridges linking Halifax and Dartmouth in the distance. Before peeling away from the basin, the railroad passes American Container Lines' port where massive container ships exchange loads with CN freight trains. Following a brief passage through a series of rock cuts, the *Ocean* calls at its eastern terminal, Halifax almost 20 hours after we departed Montreal.

The return trip to Montreal a couple of days later finds us assigned to Bedroom C in the *Chateau Denonville*. The *Ocean* departs Halifax promptly at 2:00p.m. as we make our way through five other sleepers to dome-observation car *Evangeline Park*. A family with five kids has already occupied almost one-third of the dome seats; however, there is room for us. Soon John makes friends with the other children who are making their first train trip en route to a wedding in Ottawa.

Dinnertime comes as we pass through Sackville and I'm intrigued by the sight of the wind rolling across fields of marsh grass in waves. Dining car *Wascana* is another car of CP heritage and the individual seats at each table remind me of a bygone era in passenger railroading. The menu contains multiple options ranging from lighter hot sandwiches to full course steak dinners.

After dinner we work our way back through eight sleeping cars until we reach the *Evangeline Park*. I toast my passage of the 150,000 mile mark aboard trains somewhere near Rogersville and set my sights on breaking the quarter million mile mark. This accomplishment is put in perspective as I explain to John that I could circle the Earth six times by train. How appropriate and difficult it is to be able to observe this moment in a dome car in the 1990s.

Once again we sleep wonderfully for over eight hours and awaken as the train stops in Drummondville. There is just enough time to pick up breakfast in the rear car as we watch our approach to Montreal. The train arrives five minutes early at 8:25a.m., bringing to a close one of the most enjoyable train trips I have ever experienced.

Planning A Nova Scotia Visit

While a trip aboard VIA Rail's *Ocean* is itself a wonderful experience, the first time visitor to Nova Scotia should allow several days to enjoy the charm and scenery of this fascinating province. Peggy's Cove, whose boulder-strewn shore, lighthouse, and fishing village grace many an artist's pallet, is but a short drive south of Halifax. A copious supply of photogenic villages such as Lunenburg and Mahone Bay line the Atlantic coast southward to Yarmouth. The west coast faces the Bay of Fundy and features the peaceful Annapolis Valley and a variety of small towns. To the northeast of Halifax and Truro stands Cape Breton, a deliciously remote region whose topography and town names resemble the Scottish highlands.

Halifax is a fine city in its own right with numerous fine hotels, shops, and restaurants within the downtown area. The Chateau Halifax, constructed by the Canadian Pacific Railway and still operated by Canadian Pacific Hotels, remains one of the city's finest lodging establishments. The Hotel Nova Scotian, built by the CN and connected to the railway station, stood dormant for several years until its recent rebirth as a Westin Hotel. Not to be missed on a visit to Halifax are the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic which houses a variety of nautical displays including a deck chair recovered from the *Titanic;* the Citadel, a star-shaped fortress dating to 1828; and the Halifax to Dartmouth passenger ferry which provides an unparalleled view of Halifax Harbour and the city' s skyline.

Sightseeing and lodging information for Nova Scotia is available by calling Check In Nova Scotia at (800) 341-6096. VIA Rail Canada reservations can be made by telephoning (800) 561-3949.

The author wishes to thank Malcolm Andrews, Tom Little, and Earle Leamon of VIA Rail Canada for their kind assistance with this article.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

One of the fastest and most convenient ways of getting around in downtown Miami is on the People Mover system. This overhead transit system loops all through the downtown area, and makes connections at two points with the Miami Metrorail light rail system. The People Mover uses rubber-tired, electric-powered vehicles which can transport up to 50 people. The vehicles, which do not have operators, run on an elevated concrete structure and stop automatically at each station. This system provides a better alternative than trying to drive around in this very congested city. The photo of the People Mover rounding a curve on the south side of Miami was taken on Feb 17, 1997. —Alex Mayes.

Ever wonder where traffic problems come from? Our highway engineers are caught up in an endless struggle against those problems, problems that keep them fully employed along with armies of consultants and contractors. Here's a rare opportunity to look at "before" and "after" in the daily papers:

BEFORE—Oct 5, 1990, The Denver Post, Section H:

"The location of Park Home's Founders designs is also attractive, giving residents easy access to Denver's office corridor (15 minutes), downtown Denver (20 minutes) and Colorado Springs (40 minutes).

"Families with two wage earners are close to the workplace in Denver or Colorado Springs via I-25—a 65-mile-per-hour highway that offers a fast return each evening to a low-stress, smog-free, amenity-filled community.

"It projects a small-town character—and a lifestyle closer to the land—for residents who seek refuge from the confusion and noise of the big city.

"But, it's just a quick drive to the city's employment areas, shopping malls, entertainment outlets and other essential centers."

AFTER-- Feb 21, 1997, Rocky Mountain News, page 37A:

"DOUGLAS COUNTY, STATE SEEK FUNDING FOR TRUCK LANE ON I-25."

"Douglas County and the Colorado Department of Transportation joined forces this week to tap federal funds for a truck lane on a dangerous strip of Interstate 25... highway department executive director Guillermo

Vidal... called it 'one of the top priority projects for Colorado'.

"Vidal noted that the corridor was the site of a 55-car pileup last week."

The story continues, reminding readers of the series of major crashes which have occurred on I-25 in fast-growing Douglas County. Traffic runs bumper to bumper there in peak hours, but still includes many motorists who are trying to match the promised 65-mph speed. Truck traffic in the same corridor, always heavy, has grown with urbanization. Due to the grades on the highway, trucks must drop below average motorists' speed, so a 4.1-mile-long truck lane is proposed to get them out of the way. There is no transit service in this area, because voters turned it down. After all, they were told that they lived in a rural area. Local leaders are struggling to start a van service as a substitute. Their dream of a smog-free, low-stress community is now a fiction, but with enough highway money and a token bus service, they may be able to patch it up just enough to sell the last vacant lots. And then the engineers and consultants can move on to the next green fields.

In the meantime, Colorado's leaders are searching for more highway funding. They project shortfalls in the billions for roadway projects, and point to the shortage of money for critically needed maintenance and replacement of old facilities. Last year they diverted General Fund millions into the road program. This year they may succeed in diverting millions more in sales taxes into highway spending. Voters may be offered the chance this November to vote on higher taxes for more road construction.

It's not just a perpetual motion machine; the highway program is turning into a black hole that swallows the rest of the state government. —Robert W. Rynerson.

The following letter was addressed to Prof. Gregory Thompson of Florida State University:

Thanks for urging RTN readers to support NARP efforts for Amtrak money. It is interesting to discover that you are a "devoted train advocate", according to RTN editor's note under your letter in issue 562. If you don't object, I am taking the liberty of placing your name on the mailing list of our Palm Beach NRHS monthly...

The railroads 35 years ago, unlike Amtrak, had no coordinated reservations system to attract customers, no common ticketing, telephone contact, or link with travel agencies and computers, etc. This has all been effected relatively recently, such as coordination with Greyhound. They are barely out of "square one". While I don't recall Andrew Selden saying Amtrak's "financial difficulties would disappear if it abandoned the NEC," you have not enlarged on this angle. *Why doesn't Amtrak offer NEC frequencies connecting the other 50% of our ten largest metro areas—Detroit/Cleveland/Pittsburgh/DC and Chicago-Detroit, like it does Boston/NYC/Philadelphia/Baltimore/DC?*

Why does its share of intercity passengers stay stubbornly around a statistically-zero 1%? (In 25 years of improved coordination, marketing, equipment, etc., you'd think at least a tiny 1% would shift from cars or jets to trains, which would *double* Amtrak's share—and their needs, income, clout, etc.)

Why was Amtrak silent amid threats of American Airlines' strike, when it could at least have "bluffed" by announcing added services or phone agents, etc., to help travelers, even if it didn't actually change anything much? (This reminds us of the absence of touted Amtrak overnight "business" train schedules that rival jet times when sleep time is considered, such as the **Owl**, DC-Atlanta, DC-Florida, enroute cities including Georgia, Carolinas, Chicago-Pittsburgh, Chicago-Memphis, even Chicago-Denver or the like, Chicago-Cincinnati and more.) By the way, didn't C&NW actually make money under one president?

I would like your analysis or report on total subsidies by the government this century of airways and highways, as well as passenger trains, and your opinions as to whether any would exist without help, criteria for deserving it, etc. (As you probably know, private planes which contribute virtually nothing to the airways enjoy such services.) While we admit jets expedite the world economy and cars give freedom to go anytime, *do you think a government should encourage use of rails that carry 16 times the capacity of a highway lane* and as many times safer, like restricting cars into some cities, now being done. We'd love to see a copy of your *Passenger Train in the Motor Age*. Come speak to our NRHS some fourth Thursday here.

P.S.: All concerned should be getting a "NECrepolis" (cemetary) mentality as 1% of Amtrak seems to get 99% of the money while long-distance trains "die" off.

Marvin L. Doudna
West Palm Beach, FL.

THE OPEN VESTIBULE

I enjoy Roller and your other trip reporters. They describe what they see and feel about trains they ride, not just trackside opinion... I duplicated Roller's trip described in RTN 561. The pre-Mardi Gras **City of New Orleans** was jammed, including three sleepers. But food and service were outstanding. The all-night celebrants reported that Elvis was not seen in Memphis, however. A short hour late; long multiple stops to pick up from shelters in heavy rain.

The **Crescent** was again lightly patronized out of New Orleans and the post-Mardi Gras diner crew was bad—attitude and getting the orders right. Food was great but on plastic. Excellent food at lunch too, again on plastic, but the same serving crew of two was friendly and competent. Dinner was great again, real china. Help is added at Birmingham.

Roller comments on empty cars from New Orleans. More switching at Atlanta could save cars, coaches and a sleeper. Is it worth the extra switching time and managing car cleaning? Our two diesels were adequate throughout—a Genesis unit was at Birmingham with the light lit; it didn't move—waiting for resurrection of the Mobile section?

Maybe Amtrak read Roller's comments on announcements. We had no menu readings nor endless trivia on how to ride a train. I also liked the Viewliner room and didn't notice that the bed was narrow—compared to what, a Superliner or a non-Budd roomette? After a good breakfast on china we were early into Washington and had to wait for platform space, commuter train interference.

Pleased that Roller doesn't want to knock the **Cardinal**; yes we hope Sen. Byrd stays forever. The **Cardinal** is the only Amtrak service to two medium-sized metro areas, Cincinnati and Indianapolis. It serves areas of Virginia and West Virginia with poor air and bus service, and many passengers connect to Western trains at Chicago. The **Pioneer** serves no major cities without other Amtrak service and provides few unduplicated connections.

Keep them both. Keep the **Pioneer** in Wyoming if local boardings are high (100+?) or if their senators vote right; otherwise run it north from Salt Lake City. My candidate for the ax? The Seattlle section of the **Empire Builder**—route the whole thing through Portland and maybe up to Vancouver with the savings...

Congratulations on outliving PTJ. You have provided many years of good stuff and I hope you go for many more.

Dennis L. Grant
Cincinnati OH.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The editor doesn't like to see rail advocates spending their energy thinking about which trains should be cut. *No trains should be cut! Trains should be added!* Do highway advocates sit around thinking what highways should be eliminated? They should. Highways are a much bigger financial burden on society than trains, and in addition they create numerous environmental ills that trains do not create.]

Thanks for the stimulating Thompson/Russell exchange on profitability (RTN 562). On SP management, you're both right, for different periods. Thompson describes policy circa 1940 to 1957/8, when (as I happily recall) SP ran susperb luxury trains; Russell delineates the stark Sixties, when hard-line management went all out to dump the service immediately. Still, Thompson's case is supported by the UP and ATSF experience—both kept the faith longer and refused to trash their own service; but by about 1967 both concluded that the deficits were real, growing and becoming harmful to corporate survival.

Russell is right to stress the importance of long-distance trains and their multiple roles; indeed, we might pick up Wilner's epithet of "rolling national parks" and use it positively. But we must not lose sight of the distinction between *social* benefits and strict accounting profit-and-loss (which is what Thompson discussed, and what Congress is insisting on). We should work for a way to include social benefits in the accounting process; but when we lose the distinction, we enter into the world of voodoo accounting, in which disparate kinds of numbers are juggled so as to prove that "our" trains make money while "their" trains lose it.

Despite worldwide experience to the contrary, the voodoo boys want to claim that long-distance luxury trains, with their high fuel and labor costs, "really" make money. This is pure wishful thinking, so that people can claim the luxury services they (and I) enjoy do not cost the taxpayers money. What we should be studying, and applauding, is the Amtrak West experiment with luxury service on the **Starlight**, to see wh[illegible]r people will

pay full cost for the luxury extras. This is an essential experiment, since in this age of tax cuts and retrenchments in social services for the poor, it's damned brazen to demand continued subsidies for affluent leisure travelers.

Fred Matthews
Oakland CA.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Is it a matter of charging full cost for luxury extras or giving the luxury extras that people have been paying for and not receiving?]

Professor Thompson (RTN 562) offers a traditional but deeply flawed defense of a short-corridor emphasis in rail passenger programs. His greatest error is the all-too-common refusal to acknowledge the breath-taking losses and costs incurred to sustain the status quo in the NE Corridor (NEC): $360 million in annual operating losses, an average $500 million in annual capital subsidy, and another $50 to $100 million in local costs shifted to other accounts. In total, the NEC costs the American taxpayer a billion dollars a year. (Plus whatever the states sink into it.) With "successes" like these, rail passenger service is dead in this country.

Professor Thompson's historical analysis of longer-distance services is also deeply flawed. First, rail industry and societal-cultural conditions in the early '60s have no relevance to Amtrak today. Railroads then ran way too many branch line, local and tertiary mainline trains with vastly too much labor cost to have any hope of profit on their passenger service overall. Second, passenger service "operating ratios" were and are meaningless, then and today, because they followed the notorious ICC "Form A" accounting protocols, a bizarre system designed to load fully allocated costs onto the passenger system. This system became the basis for the "Route Profitability System" still used by Amtrak for the same purpose. Prof. Thompson didn't, and can't, explain by his theory and outlook why the highest-grossing single train Amtrak ran (before Tom Downs swallowed the Mercer pill) was the **Empire Builder**, running across the empty wastes of North Dakota and northern Montana. And high speed has nothing to do with the **Empire Builder's** phenomenal cash-generating performance.

Which leads to another annoying little paradox: outside the NEC, Amtrak *trains* produce a positive net cash flow, there just aren't enough trains to absorb Amtrak's still-inflated fixed costs, and NEC cost reassignments to Western services. Prof. Thompson hasn't dealt with the AEM-7 equipment maintenance costs allocated to the **Coast Starlight**, for example.

This is not to say that Amtrak couldn't do a *lot* better in the NEC than it does now. It could. With a different service paradigm. Available seat-miles and the route matrix could be multiplied several fold at a net *saving* of $150 million a year. But Amtrak, NARP and others appear to be too wedded to the high cost-low performance status quo in that market to explore innovative growth opportunities even in the Northeast.

Finally, if Prof. Thompson is right about the economics of high-density, high-cost, short-distance corridors versus high-productivity long-haul routes, why do so many airlines fly so many seats across the completely unpopulated North Atlantic and North Pacific oceans? And how come they make so much money doing it? While USAir goes slowly bankrupt flying high-cost, high-density, high-fare, short-haul routes in the Northeast?

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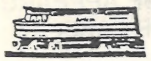

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